

Liberating Men May Be Result



By Clayton Fritchey

WASHINGTON — Women's Liberation Day has come and gone, and in its wake it is easy to see that much of the male community is still not very impressed. This is exasperating enough to the Lib leaders, but even more infuriating is the condescending tendency of males to shrug it off with patronizing humor, or what they deem to be humor.

"The editors of the papers are treating this thing as a joke," exclaimed Rep. Martha Griffiths, D-Mich. "They're laughing."

Mrs. Griffiths, one of the most respected members of Congress, has been a prime backer of a constitutional amendment to guarantee women equal rights. She does not often lose her temper. In this instance, she was attacking the right sex, but the wrong profession. Most newspapers gave tremendous coverage to Lib Day, and their editorials were generally sympathetic. The Miami Herald cautioned, "Don't joke about Women's Liberation — it is a serious thing." And the Washington Star added, "Despite the humorous outlook that prevails when the boys talk it over, the drive for women's equality is a serious political movement that could have a profound effect on American life."

CONTRAST. — The sobriety of the press, however, is in marked contrast with the flip, often derisory reaction of the male community at large, which obviously doesn't take the new challenge very seriously. It is not a perceptive view. As has been said, nothing is so irresistible as an idea whose time has come — and in this case all the signs suggest that the time is ripe for a new deal for women.

The only wonder is that it has taken so long. Women of voting age in the US have been piling up an ever larger majority over men for years; it is now over 6 million. Yet only recently have they begun to exploit some of this potential power. Kate Millett's book, "Sexual Politics," an attack on male supremacy, is a best seller not only because it is absorbing, but because lots of women are suddenly ready for her message. As against this, Mrs. Lucy Benson, president of the US League of Women Voters, warns that if the feminist leaders push the liberation movement too hard there could be a "Lib-lash." Mrs. Benson, how-

ever, overlooks the unique fact that women are the only "minority" that is in a majority.

SENSITIVE — Legislators, naturally more sensitive to the political whims than most other men, are beginning to sense that women for the first time are developing a capacity for concerted political action. This showed up in the House's recent overwhelming approval of the Equal Rights Amendment. It is also showing up in the sudden rush of state legislatures to repeal medieval abortion laws originally put on the books by men.

Along with this, women are rapidly learning how to use the courts, mass protests and strikes to overcome discrimination. Examples abound. The latest is the capitulation of Newsweek to its women employes after they ganged up to demand equal opportunity on the magazine. If Newsweek yields, can Time be far behind?

A few days ago, an unmarried Navy woman, whose stillborn child was fathered by an enlisted sailor, went to federal court after the Navy brass busted her because of her pregnancy, which ended in a miscarriage. She charges her dismissal was based on a double sexual standard and was therefore a violation of her constitutional rights.

ARGUMENT — She argues that if men are not discharged for having extra-marital or pre-marital sexual relations, then neither should she. Her suit is significant because it is being brought as a "class action" to represent all other women in the Armed Services, and because she asked the court to ban all military regulations based on sex. The suit is backed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Betty Friedan, a pioneer in the liberation movement, thinks it may lead to a new religion, thus: "The question in the 1960s was, 'Is God dead?' The question in the 1970s will be, 'Is God He'" In accepting petitions favoring the Equal Rights Amendment, now before the Senate, Mike Mansfield, the majority leader, voiced the thought of some of his more enlightened colleagues when he gently said, "Maybe in liberating them (women), we'll liberate ourselves (men)." Just so.